

BOYD MEMORIAL PARK  
1125 B Street  
San Rafael  
Marin County  
California

HALS CA-47  
CA-47

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700  
Oakland, CA 94607

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### BOYD MEMORIAL PARK

HALS NO. CA-47

Location: 1125 B Street, San Rafael, Marin County, CA  
Lat: 37.9779 Long: -122.528

Significance: This property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is associated with an early pioneer family who made their fortune in the California gold fields. The property is part of a complex that includes Falkirk, also listed on the National Register. The site retains an elaborately detailed wall and fence along the front property line, and many historic trees, of a mixed variety, typical of gardens of that era.

History: Boyd memorial park was created as a memorial to Seth and John Boyd, sons of John F. Boyd and his wife, Louise. The park was dedicated in 1905. Louise was the granddaughter of Ira Cook who came to the City of San Rafael in 1874. Cook owned property along Mission Avenue that is now occupied by "Falkirk" the original family home and now a community center. It also included the Cook-Boyd home now used by the Elks Club, and Boyd Memorial Park, which includes the Boyd Gate House.

The Boyd Gate house construction was commissioned by Ira Cook in 1879 and was built to house family guests. The builder was Adam Murray. Since 1959, the City of San Rafael has used the Boyd Gate House for the Marin History Museum.

Dan and Seth Cook who were successful gold miners at the Bodie Mine in California developed the gardens for these properties. Dan and Seth hired a "noted landscape architect from Boston to design the gardens" according to Judith M. Taylor, in her book "Tangible Memories Californians and their Gardens 1800-1850". The name of the landscape architect is unknown.

Description: The most prominent features of Boyd Memorial Park are several mature trees including several exotic species, and a beautifully detailed wall and ornamental iron fence with four richly detailed gates. The core of the wall consists of a combination of stone cobbles and brick pieces that are faced with concrete. It has a carved, granite cap and an ornately detailed, ornamental ironwork fence 30 inches high. This wall – fence runs the length of Mission Avenue, turns up hill (north) at the corner of B Street for a half block and turns again to run east to the southeast corner of the park property.

There are two gates on Mission Avenue. The west gate is about 5 feet wide and has granite gateposts and a double ornamental iron gate. The left gatepost is etched with "Boyd Memorial Park dedicated April 24, 1905". A concrete path

and two sets of concrete stairs lead uphill into the park. There is a tennis court east of this path parallel to Mission Avenue.

Further east on Mission Avenue is a second gate, marked by two very large Yew trees/*Taxus baccata* that form dense spheres of dark foliage. A concrete path, with narrow, 3" wide concrete curbs, leads toward the east side of the Boyd Gate House. There is a stout granite corner post at the corner of Mission Avenue and B Street.

The third gate is a low ornamental iron two-part gate directly in front of the front door of the house, now occupied by the Marin History Museum. A carved post topped with a planted urn is integrated into the wall just east of the front door.

Further east on Mission there is a fourth gate. This two-part ornamental iron gate is at a driveway that leads behind the gatehouse and up into the park and other portions of the Cook-Boyd property. This gate is flanked by two, tall, ornately carved gateposts. To the east of the gate the stonewall is engraved with the name of the park and dedication date.

The park consists of terraced planting beds that rise up a steep slope. Rock-lined paths meander through the park; some follow the route of a rock-lined channel. The serpentine channel is bridged in a few locations and leads to the Old Mission Spring. This spring was likely the source of water for nearby Mission San Rafael, established in 1817.

Much of the understory plantings are no longer extant but the park has many large specimen trees including *Araucaria excelsa*, deodar cedar, camphor, incense cedar and a variegated thuya. New plantings have been added to the park. There is a wooden flagpole on a circular concrete base in the southeast corner of the park.

North and west of the house there is a granite monument surrounded by triangular concrete paths and three southern magnolia/*Magnolia grandiflora*. There is a drinking fountain on the backside of the monument. The dedication says: This park is the gift of Louise Arner Boyd and John F. Boyd, dedicated to Seth Cook Boyd and John Franklin Boyd Jr. April 24, 1905."

The property also has bronze plaque mounted on a boulder, north of the front door of the house, that commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Marin History Museum.

Sources: Marin History Museum: <http://www.marinhistory.org/history.html>  
[www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com](http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com)

Marin Convention and Visitors Bureau:  
[http://vistmarin.org/things\\_to\\_do/attractions.html](http://vistmarin.org/things_to_do/attractions.html)

"Tangible Memories: Californians and Their Gardens 1800 - 1850", by Judith M. Taylor M.D. and the late Herry M. Butterfield, 2003, Xlibris Corporation.

Historian: Chris Pattillo, Landscape Architect, 2010  
PGAdesign  
444 17th Street  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510)550-8855  
[pattillo@PGAdesign.com](mailto:pattillo@PGAdesign.com)



Lower corner of property showing stone pillar and wall with ornamental iron. Two Taxus trees mark on entry to the property and residence, now used as the Marin Historical Museum (Chris Pattillo, February 7, 2010).